

CA1
PV22
-65K31

Government
Publications



"MEETING
POVERTY"



Canada

SPECIAL
PLANNING
SECRETARIAT

F/D **Kingston Community Project, 1965, Summer Report**



This is one of a series of documents under the general title of "Meeting Poverty" issued by the Special Planning Secretariat to encourage a better understanding of poverty in Canada and of measures to meet it.

Additional single copies of this document and a current listing of other titles in the series may be obtained free by writing:

Meeting Poverty,
Privy Council Office,
Ottawa, Ontario.

Distribution of this document does not imply endorsement of its contents by the Special Planning Secretariat.

Voici un document d'une série portant le titre général de "Face à la pauvreté" distribué par le Secrétariat des plans spéciaux en vue de favoriser une meilleure intelligence du problème de la pauvreté au Canada et des mesures destinées à y remédier.

On pourra se procurer gratuitement un exemplaire supplémentaire de ce document et une liste à jour des autres titres faisant partie de la série, en écrivant à:

Face à la pauvreté,
Secrétariat des plans spéciaux,
Bureau du Conseil privé,
Ottawa (Ontario).

La distribution de ce document ne signifie pas que le Secrétariat des plans spéciaux souscrit à son contenu.

INTRODUCTION

For the past four months the 12 students and several area residents of the Kingston Community Project have worked as community organizers in the poorer districts of Kingston. It is our conviction that many of the problems associated with poverty can be tackled and resolved by the poor themselves through co-operative political action. For more information on our method, aims and background, and for an analysis of poverty in Kingston, we refer you to the KCP Prospectus.

In the following pages we propose to critically evaluate our method and achievements. In keeping with our policy of individual responsibility, project participants have outlined and evaluated their own work; a general evaluation of goals and structures is the only project statement.

We feel that we have all earned a great deal about poverty and that our experience suggests viable means of alleviating it. We hope that this report will be of interest to all those who have helped us, and of assistance to those planning similar projects.

The Editors

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. KCP HISTORY

Project diary.....	p.2
For a safer Rideau Street.....	p.5
Montreal Street confrontation with landlord.....	p.13
Towards better Housing.....	p.18
A tenants' council in the low-rentals.....	p.22
Ontario Street report	p.28

B. DISCUSSIONS

How did we begin to organize?.....	p.32
Another approach to organizing.....	p.33
"Poor people".....	p.34
"What do the tenants say".....	p.35
Politics and poverty.....	p.36

C. EVALUATION

The KCP and the public.....	p.37
General evaluation.....	p.41
A decentralized structure.....	p.44
The future.....	p.47
From a friend.....	p.47
To our fellow students.....	p.48

Winter

PROJECT DIARY

Feb. 26 KCP welcomed to 1st meeting of Housing and Welfare Committee at city hall.
Mar. 2 KCP program presented to annual meeting of Queen's AMS: \$1300 voted for operating expenses.
Mar. 29 Selection of project participants.
Apr. 29 Meeting of Community Welfare Council of Kingston; 15 briefs presented. Most attacked slum landlords.

May

May 9-10 KCP Training Seminar in Toronto
May 11 KCP moves into two residences in Kingston, organizes office, and begins familiarization with the area.
May 16 Research for the prospectus begins.
May 31 Afternoon discussion with John Eleen, research director of the Ontario Federation of Labour, and John McKinnon, president of the Kingston Labour Council. Eleen addresses second meeting of the Welfare and Housing Committee.
KCP meets Mrs. McCann, contact for Rideau Street.

June

June 1 Whig-Standard article and editorial on Eleen's speech begin spectacularization of Kingston poverty. Peggy and Bron begin organizing on Rideau Street.
June 2 Olivia and Don begin organizing on Rideau Street.
June 8 Polson Park petition; city reroutes trucks.
June 10 Diana makes first contact on Montreal Street.
June 13-18 Dennis and Phil attend SDS Training Institute in Michigan.
June 14 Sally and Bill begin work on Chatham Street. Peggy and Bron begin work on Bagot Street. Rideau Heights parents patrol road after girl is molested; immediate response from politicians and police. Rideau Street petition on traffic drafted.
June 15 Rev. Good attacks poor housing and inadequacy of low-rental units.
June 16 McKinnon indirectly suggests that KCP about to expose slum landlords in statement in Whig-Standard.
June 17 Rideau petition given to leaders for circulation.
June 18 Meeting with Hutch, Webb, Bennett and press.
June 19 Press coverage of Rideau petition on radio, TV, and Whig-Standard.
June 21 Meeting of Rideau residents present demands to Alderman Webb. Webb hints at traffic survey.

- June 25 KCP meeting restructures internal organization. Jobs are delegated for more efficient administration of research, fund-raising, public relations, and block strategizing. Two Montreal Street women and two project members take leases to lawyer and discover threatened rent raise is illegal.
- June 26 Sally and Bill begin organizing on Ontario Street.
- June 29 Kingston poverty 'discovered' by five part series of articles and three editorials in Whig.
- Jul. 5
- July
- July 2 One of Hewett's tenants arranges a private meeting with him for the 6th.
- July 4 Sally and Bill meet Mrs. Parker, prime mover in the Ontario St. Playground issue.
- July 5 Alderman Matthews and Rev. Good come to dinner and low rentals are discussed.
- July 6 Meeting with the Mayor, and Aldermen Bruce, Keyes, and Bennett.
Montreal St. tenants and Diana and Sarah assemble in apartment, sign list of demands, and decide to insert ad asking for meeting with Hewett in personal column of Whig.
- July 7 Philip starts working at Riverview (low rentals).
2nd Rideau St. petition hits the news.
Ont. Housing Corp. announces survey to determine the number of low-rental units needed for Kingston.
- July 8-11 3 day mid-summer vacation at Grindstone Island
- July 12 Traffic and Streets meeting to discuss both Rideau St. petitions; two residents and Dennis attend.
Preliminary meeting of some Ontario St. residents to discuss playground for children.
- July 13 5 prominent clergy meet with KCP and promise financial and moral support. Rev. John Findlater sends appeal to all Kingston clergy.
- July 14&18 Rev. Oswald (St. Mark's Lutheran) discusses project from pulpit and replaces sermon with dialogue between two project members on poverty.
- July 15 The Canadian Register covers Hewett issue and pays the \$20 he demanded for a meeting.
Peggy, Bron and Sue start to work with Mann's tenants.
- July 17 Surprise confrontation with Hewett; he agrees to meet tenants on July 27.
- July 19 Meeting of Ontario St. residents at St. George's Church. Alderman Cook attends.
- July 20 Delegation from Ontario St. attend meeting of Parks and Recreations Committee to request park. Webb promises to negotiate.
Two Montreal St. tenants who had attended the meeting receive pseudo-eviction notices from Hewett; no legal validity.

- July 21 Canadian Register story of Hewett issue published nationally. Eastern Ontario Edition features story on KCP.
Stewart Goodings of the Company of Young Canadians visits the project.
- July 22 Hewett begins retaliation through Whig.
Upchurches given verbal notice of eviction for showing Register reporter scene of accident.
\$20 meeting issue covered coast to coast; front page coverage in Globe and Mail.
- July 23 Mayor orders Building and Fire Inspectors to check Montreal St. homes.
- July 24 Tenants prepare reply to Hewett's charges.
Mrs. Parker told that a lot had been granted for Ontario St. park and city would clear land and supply equipment if residents would supervise.
- July 26 Whig refuses to print Montreal St. tenants' statement, which is later printed as a letter to the editor.
Tom Kosh visits project for CBC Special (Sept. 12) on poverty.
- July 27 Hewett publicly praises KCP for work with tenants.
Final meeting with Hewett; seven press, 3 aldermen, 4 tenants.
- July 28 Favourable news coverage of Montreal St. meeting.
- July 30 Register features Ontario St. housing and Upchurch law suit. Hewett advertises Landlord's Association.

August

- Aug. 5 Visit from two Western students planning similar project.
- Aug. 7 Register examines low-rentals; editorial praises KCP.
- Aug. 10 Mann's tenants meet at project house.
- Aug. 14 Register features bad housing owned by Mann.
- Aug. 15 Riverview tenants meet at St. Matthew's Church to discuss formation of tenants' council.
- Aug. 16 Dylan, project kitten, acquired.
- Aug. 17 Toronto Star features KCP on first page of women's section.
- Aug. 20 Visit from Pat Kenniff, President, Canadian Union of Students.
- Aug. 23 Area leaders meet at project house.
- Aug. 26 Summer report published.
- Aug. 27 Summer phase of project ends.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2023 with funding from
University of Toronto

<https://archive.org/details/31761117094847>

FOR A SAFER RIDEAU STREET

Integration into the Area

Rideau Street runs from Barrack north, parrallel to the Catarauqui River. It is through road, one of the many arteries carrying heavy traffic out of the city. On this dirty street rows of houses stand close to the pavement, and large industries, including a metal junk yard and several oil tanks make its appearance anything but pretty. It is on the first four blocks of this street, from Barrack to Raglan, and the adjoining side streets, particularly Bay, where bad housing is prevalent and the population dense, that most of our block-organizing activities took place this summer.

Work on Rideau Street, which started at the beginning of June, happened entirely by chance. We attended the second meeting of the Mayor's subcommittee on Welfare and Housing on Monday, May 31, and at the end of this meeting we met a fellow spectator, Mrs. McCann. Having lived in poor housing herself, Mrs. McCann was very keen on seeing improvements in the housing conditions in Kingston. Over coffee she described some of the housing she had seen and urged us to visit a friend, a Mrs. B., who lived on Rideau Street. An appointment was set up for two days later.

Our first visit to Mrs. B's apartment, which took place on Wednesday, June 2, was an eye-opener, not simply because of the living conditions, but because of the fantastic vitality and energy of this woman. She lives in two rooms and a kitchen, the basement of an old house, with seven children, a large labrador dog, and a cat, all of which she has under perfect control. The bathroom is two flights up, and the children dress in a closet. There is dangerous wiring in the bedroom, and when it rains the water streams in and runs down the walls. Her grievances, naturally, were many - the housing conditions and the difficulties of getting into low-rental housing; the impossibility of controlling the children in this neighbourhood; the danger, because of the traffic; the landlord, and the difficulties of getting anything fixed: complaints that have been common in all our converstions with the people on Rideau Street.

Through Mrs. B. we met several of the other residents of the street, and by the weekend of June 4-6 we knew about 12 people on that block. All of the women were worried about the safety of their children crossing the street on their way to school, and one lady suggested the idea of a co-operative traffic patrol, to be organized by the parents, each of them taking turns marshalling the children across the road at lunch time and after school when traffic was heaviest. A meeting was set up to be held on Saturday, June 5, to discuss this idea. However, none of them were prepared to hold the meeting in their home, so the idea was dropped. For this reason we decided to move

into the next block from Ordinance to Bay in an attempt to find leaders who would encourage the more reticent ones on the first block.

New Developments

The following week, Monday, June 7-12, saw two new developments. Through several new contacts, we discovered that although housing was a grievance, it was not common to all the residents. Bad housing conditions were spotty and there were no common landlords. Because the residents of Rideau Street lived in isolation from each other, did not like their neighbours, and were not interested in them at all, we decided that a common issue was essential to bring these people together as a unit. Our new contacts on the second block verified our suspicions that traffic was a common problem. The second event of importance that week was a petition sent to the Mayor by the residents of Polson Park after Robert Steacey, 3 years old, was run over by a truck, demanding that trucks be re-routed. The petition resulted in quick action by the Mayor and Council to improve conditions. This was the first accident involving children in the area this year, and the cause was immediately controlled. We knew that several accidents had occurred this year on Rideau Street and that nothing had been done about it; the city had not even bothered to place a school-crossing guard on the corner of Ordinance and Rideau where traffic is heaviest and where the children cross to go to school.

Then on Monday, June 14, the women of Rideau Heights set up a patrol to safe-guard their children after a small girl had been molested. This did it: If the people in Polson Park and Rideau Heights could right wrongs, so could the residents of Rideau Street. Research in the Whig-Standard files showed that there had been six accidents involving children, one fatal, one nine blocks of Rideau Street, from January to May. All that had been done to rectify this was that alderman Hugh Bennett had requested that a small traffic survey be taken. Furthermore, the residents had not been told of this request.

The Petition

The people wanted a petition, but none of them were prepared to write it, so we drew up a draft copy fashioned after the Polson Park petition, suggesting that guards be put in on Rideau Street, that a stop sign be erected on the corner of Ordinance and Bay, and that radar traps be enforced along the whole length of the road. The petition was taken around to the leaders for their criticisms. Although new ideas came out of this, the draft petition was accepted by all the people. Therefore, on Tuesday, June 18, copies were given to the leaders to take around to the other residents for their signatures; they were to be picked up

on Friday. The success of the petition blitz was aided by an accident that took place on the corner of Ordinance and Rideau just as the petitions were being passed around.

Then the action became publicized. On Friday morning CKLC news was full of the "hundreds of mysterious petitions" that were being passed around Rideau Street, a result of the fact that one of the residents, "Hutch", had disliked the remedies suggested in the petition and the way it was addressed to the Mayor instead of to the aldermen. Hutch had contacted Hugh Bennett and George Webb. Apparently they were angry at being overlooked, and were determined to root out the originators. Therefore, when Hutch discovered our identity on Friday at noon, he notified the aldermen. The press came along and most of the project ended up at a meeting at Hutch's. The main results of the meeting were that we promised to ask the residents if they would be willing to hold back the petition until a formal survey of the street had been taken. The aldermen promised to request a survey. CKLC gave fair statements from all of us; and the Whig-Standard presented a murky picture of both sides, hinting that we were both beatniks and spies and quoting Alderman Webb as saying, "Any alderman that looks for trouble is a fool."

On Saturday and Sunday, June 18-19, we arranged a meeting of the residents who had handed around the petition, to take place on Monday night. The meeting went ahead as scheduled, with nine residents and four project members present. A lot of the discussion centred around Rideau St. park. Since all present agreed that little could be done about traffic until the survey had been completed, it was decided to give the petition to George Webb to present in council the following week. Also, a list of demands was drawn up and presented to him when he dropped in to the meeting. They included a fence around the park, "Watch for Children" signs, and increased police control.

The Results

During the following two weeks, the traffic survey was completed, the fence erected (albeit an old snow fence), two "Watch for Children" signs were put up, and a radar trap was on duty eighteen hours a day. Meanwhile, we made new contacts and moved into Bay St. by meeting one lady on the corner of Bay and Rideau who knew everyone on the block. Mr. and Mrs. C., our best leaders on Rideau St., kept pushing for another meeting during this time, but we were unable to have one because we could not obtain the findings of the traffic survey. At a meeting, Alderman Bennett suggested that we had 'instigated' another petition on upper Rideau. We denied this and asked him to contact the residents. We saw the people there who said they wanted to handle the petition themselves. They also added that they had received their initiative for the petition from hearing

about the original petition. On Thursday, July 8, Bennett accused us of being instigators in the Whig-Standard. We denied again and publically demanded that he contact the residents. There were no further comments from him.

It was announced that a meeting of the Traffic and Streets Committee would discuss the two Rideau Street petitions on Monday, July 13. We spent Sunday and Monday, July 11-12, urging people both on Rideau and Bay to attend and offer their opinions. Many people were determined to go, and four of our leaders were going to take along a couple of friends. However, the time of the meeting was later announced as being 6 p.m., dinner hour and a time when most of the mothers on our blocks could not leave home. Therefore, instead of a large delegation only two residents and one project member went to City Hall to meet the committee. Even so, they represented the people very well, and a decision was reached to poll the area residents to see whether they want to have parking removed from the street entirely. This has still to be done.

Bay Street

After the middle of July, the traffic issue lessened in importance and because housing was building up into a large issue on Montreal Street, we began concentrating on it ourselves to support the Montreal Street tenants' efforts. Hewett owns four houses on Bay Street, so a meeting was organized with two tenants there. Their complaints were similar to those of Hewett's other tenants - a filthy backyard, no fire escape, and no repairs made, although these tenants were even more concerned with the people downstairs breeding dogs in the basement. They met with one of the Montreal Street tenants to discuss their common landlord and one of the women sent a can of watered-down paint that Hewett had given her up to Montreal Street for the landlord - tenants meeting to demonstrate the quality of the equipment he provides them with.

During this time we also met the people who live in Hewett's houses on Miller's Lane, where the rent had been more than doubled after he took over the property and continued to make ourselves thoroughly at home on Bay Street. In these operations we were aided by Mrs. D. and her 16 year old daughter, Joyce, who live on Bay Street. A divorcee with seven children, living on mothers' allowance, this amazing woman still found time to help us and ended up practically adopting us. Joyce began coming on the blocks regularly and we found her a real asset, because she was so enthusiastic and determined to do something to help her community, and because she could match hardship stories with anyone, showing people that they were not the only ones experiencing that problem.

The Future

A decision is pending for the two of us. If we are away from our blocks for more than a few days, problems pile up to be met on our return. One lady is worried about her teenage daughter; a landlord has brought pressure to bear upon another family. In the past week, one of our leaders, upon phoning the C.A.S. to complain about bed-bugs, was advised to contact us: "They will go to speak to your landlord with you or maybe they can get the complaint publicized." It is difficult for us to decide where our responsibilities lie. We are returning to Queen's in two weeks and yet we have formed strong bonds with these people which are hard to break. We have decided to continue on a part-time basis this winter.

The Philosophy of the Action: Rationale

The Rideau petition was the KCP's debut in the community and its first involvement with the local politicians and press. Aside from the concrete benefits to Rideau Street, the experience helped us both philosophically and tactically in understanding our roles and in breaking through what may be termed an embryonic project ideology.

The most difficult (disappointing) aspect of the Rideau area was the lack of community consciousness; i.e. the lack of established patterns of identification, friendship and co-operation with one's neighbours on common problems. Since this is probably characteristic of the poverty areas in other small Canadian cities, its implications must be explored.

The first implication is that many of the problems associated with poverty (e.g. rents, housing, etc.) are inappropriate for initial organizing. Whereas on Rideau Street individuals neither know nor like their neighbours, where problems are not recognized as shared, and where there are no common foci of resentment for agitation (e.g. slum landlord), the possibilities for community action are minimal. This should not be construed as an excuse for inaction: the fact of poverty exists on Rideau Street and it exists as a fact that must be eradicated. But if the attack is to be waged and led by the poor themselves, then the organizer must be prepared to create a community movement strong enough to overcome the risk and enormity of confronting the more powerful groups. This demands a long range program of successful actions on smaller issues which may be ostensibly irrelevant to poverty but which are recognized as real problems in the area and are designed to develop community consciousness. Rideau Street traffic was such a problem for us. It was the only issue which could bring residents together in a specifically political context, promote co-operation, and teach the value of collective action in a democratic movement.

The second implication of the lack of "community" is that integration into an area is considerably more difficult than, for example a multi-acre slum or ghetto. Rather than locating and recruiting the community's leaders who then build and direct a movement, the Canadian organizer (or we) must meet and recruit everyone in the area himself. And this forces a very difficult decision upon the organizer: whether to postpone action until the people concerned know and trust one another sufficiently to fully participate in and direct a mass action, or on the other hand, to initiate issues designed to bring people together and promote collective, co-operative action. The danger of the former is that it postpones the action indefinitely, and perhaps forever.

By initiating issues, however, the organizer is, at least at the outset, the only person known and trusted by all the participants, and consequently may be considered their leader; this may restrict the assumption of initiative by the people. This must be weighed against the advantage of being able to act upon an issue while it is "hot" and of achieving concrete results within a limited span of time. It is our experience that this approach works: as individuals become more committed to the action, they exercise greater personal initiative and leadership, absorbing the organizer into the movement and ultimately considering the action and its achievements their own. But regardless of his decision, the organizer must identify with the people of his area, consider himself a member and not the director of their movement, and strive at establishing relationships based upon friendship, trust and honesty with them.

Organizer's Role

It was on this point that we were at fault. There is no doubt that the residents' acceptance of us and participation in the action was definitely less than it could have been had we identified more fully with the area and truly sought to make friends with the people. In fact, the primary motivation of our initial agitation was the personal desire to succeed as organizers - rather than the objective problem of traffic and the frustrations it caused the people. As a result we tended to agitate rather than organize and 'push' the people rather than work with them.

This is inevitable in a three month project; the pressure to produce imposed by the time limit leads, inevitably, to the "Agitator approach." A long-range project would remove this pressure and promote fuller identification with the area. Translated into practice, this theory demands that organizers must be prepared to live in the area - in residents' homes if possible, but at all costs separately. In this way the bulk of their time and most of their friendships will be located there.

Nevertheless, we know that no action would have been taken had we not seized the initiative. No petition would have been drafted, no meetings held, and nothing accomplished. But, surprisingly enough, although we initiated the action it was taken over by some area residents who ultimately considered both the action and its accomplishments theirs. Moreover, their initiative apparently prompted the second petition.

In fact, our worst mistake was to relax the pressure. Having recognized our mistake in pushing the people, we tried to compensate for it by dropping the issue and concentrating on making friends with them. This disappointed a few leaders - they still didn't know one another and were not prepared to act independently. As a result the initiative passed out of their hands and the development of a community movement was retarded.

The Action

Politically it was stupid of us to have addressed the petition to the Mayor rather than to the aldermen. This was an honest mistake: it was based on the Polson Park petition which got faster, better results than ours. We can only conclude that the aldermen were either publicity seekers or afraid of having issues raised in their wards.

Similarly, public relations were faulty. Our original policy of refusing to deal with the press until after we had community strength proved unwise when the press spectacularized the "mystery petition....origin unknown." Had they known of our presence and our intent, the coverage could have been greatly improved and the political misunderstandings avoided. Fortunately, we learned this lesson and this problem was avoided on future actions.

Perhaps our worst tactical mistake was in agreeing to the meeting with the aldermen and the press. First, residents should always attend and fully participate in any discussion concerning their issue, and secondly, the heat of controversy is rarely a good time to clarify confusions with a politician.

Advantages

Nevertheless, we must remember that the action was a good one from an overall point of view and a successful one for Rideau Street. For the project, it was a highly beneficial introduction to the true nature of community organizing, and an opportunity to test our hypotheses concerning public relations, handling meetings, pressuring people etc. The two of us have since altered our approach so that right now our best friends are on the blocks.

The issue also introduced the project to the community in a favourable way (a "big" local issue is traffic). We all had a concrete way of introducing ourselves, resulting in a more receptive response.

But by far the most important achievement (and herein lies the real value of our action) was the impact on Rideau Street.

First, several leaders emerged; they held a meeting and countless discussions, drafted their demands, presented them to the aldermen who executed them and carried their case to City Hall. Second, a fenced park, signs, and heavy police patrol now guard children's lives - and residents are extremely pleased with the improved conditions. Whereas six kids have been hit in the five months before the action began, none have been hit in the three months (almost) since; but the accident rate in the rest of the city has increased.

The most significant reason for this is the new responsibility assumed by the parents. One result of the publicity was that residents became aware of the danger, and consequently more watchful. They have begun to take neighbours' children off the streets and to speak to negligent parents. Fences are going up and in September there is likely to be a drive to install a crossing guard. In short, a few seeds have been planted.

Olivia Howell
Don Carmichael

Demand Safer Streets for Children

(The following clipping, from the Whig-Standard of June 18, was the first mention in the press of the KCP's presence and activities) ed.

"A second citizen's group, demanding safer city streets for children, is operating in St. Lawrence Ward.

Hundreds of individual petitions have been circulated to Rideau and Bagot street residents during the past 48 hours.

No one person has been identified as the one behind the safe streets campaign. The petitions were circulated by a number of persons, including area residents and at least one Queen's University student.

The petition reads in part: "In fact this problem is most severe on Rideau Street. Here one child has already been killed and five others have been injured. Thus, the blocks of Rideau Street from Barrack to Cataragui account for approximately one-quarter of the city's total of traffic accidents involving children this year."

The petition asks: "How many more innocent children must be killed or maimed before the city takes steps to guarantee the right of young children to safely cross the street?"

MONTREAL STREET CONFRONTATION WITH LANDLORD

Initial Contacts

Diana and Sarah began working on a block of sub-standard houses in the Montreal Street area. On June 10th, Diana approached one of the tenants after hearing from a friend of this woman's poor living conditions. She became friends with this woman who introduced her to some of the other tenants on the block. Between June 10th and June 23rd we talked to the people who later proved the most willing to act, and after many conversations decided to organize around housing.

Many factors convinced us of the need for this action and of its potential success:

1. A threatened rent increase effective July 1st was ostensibly contingent upon the removal of debris from a common back-yard. Some tenants claimed that they cleaned up the yard but that they could not afford a cartage truck. Some of the debris was removed later by the landlord and one of the tenants. After this removal the landlord gave verbal notice that the rent increase would occur anyway.
2. Some of the tenants had leases on which the rent was written, thus suggesting that the rent increase was illegal.
3. The landlord consistently procrastinated when asked to make repairs, which ranged from bedbugs to leaking rooves to peeling paint. Hostility was evident towards landlords in general and this one in particular.
4. Most tenants experienced the problems of low income, seasonal unemployment and children under 11 years without a safe place to play.

On June 25th two women and two members of the project took their leases to a lawyer and were assured that the rent could not legally be raised. The excitement generated by this assurance prompted us to approach new tenants with emphasis on the housing issue. A meeting was then scheduled for June 30th. The day before the meeting a woman gashed her hand on a cracked window and though they had just move in, her husband offered their place for the planned meeting.

We encouraged the meeting because we felt there was sufficient enthusiasm to carry through the action. We hoped that tenants would gain confidence from the very fact of a meeting, would be assured that others were serious and willing to act in a group, and would experience a sense of direction and constructive action that would result in their influencing others to join.

Tenants' Meeting

At the meeting the tenants drew up a list of ten demands. Some of them requested that all leaking rooves be repaired, all hot water tanks be wrapped, a fence be built in the backyard so that small children of the block would be kept away from the busy street, the outside walls of the houses be re-painted. Over the previous few days attempts by various individuals to contact the landlord were frustrated because he was reportedly out of town. Assuming that he had heard of the meeting and was deliberately avoiding contact, the tenants planned to surprise him when he arrived to collect rent Friday night, July 2nd. Fear of the landlord had evaporated during the meeting and people displayed a great deal of group cohesion by parcelling out tasks in preparation for the Friday night meeting.

On July 2nd the key person for the confrontation was absent. Since she was the person from whom the landlord normally collected rent at that time, the plan was ruined and the meeting was cancelled.

Unfortunately it was difficult to involve more people from the rest of the block. Most feared eviction, some considered collective action ineffective and some considered the landlord a personal friend. At that point we realized the extent to which the tenants believed that the landlord had power over their movements and we concluded that they needed outside moral support. We felt that the presence of a lawyer at the meeting would help dispel the fear of eviction and would support the active tenants by presenting written proof of the landlord's legal obligations. Efforts were made to bring in the press to ensure future public pressure.

Second Attempt at Confrontation

On July 2nd one of the tenants had arranged a private meeting with the landlord for July 6th. Although neither the lawyer nor the press had promised to attend a meeting the tenants were willing to plan for a surprise meeting. Out of fear that the tenants' interest would dissipate, we encouraged them to challenge him as soon as possible. Also, we were afraid that the landlord would discover the plan and prevent direct confrontation through intimidation or bribery (i.e. offering tenants another of his apartments in a different area or agreeing to partial repairs).

The night of July 6th we assembled in the apartment and waited in vain for the landlord. The tenants signed the list of ten demands and decided to place an ad in the Personal Column of the daily newspaper asking the landlord to reply in writing and state a time and place for a meeting.

New Developments

Before completion of this plan new forces appeared on the scene:

1. A vacillating news department refused to print the ad, claiming that they risked a libel suit. When assured by a lawyer that the ad was not libellous they reluctantly agreed to print it.
2. One of the tenants reached the landlord who stated that he would discuss things with his tenants if they paid him \$20. (He assumed that the meeting would take four hours and demanded \$5 an hour).
3. The Canadian Register, a national Catholic newspaper published in Kingston, heard about the project and the Montreal Street action, offered to provide the \$20, and gave their moral support to both the project and the issue.

On Friday, July 16th, the tenants sent a bank money order and covering letter to the landlord asking him to meet with the tenants the following Monday, July 19th. The indication or solid support from the paper helped dissolve fear of eviction, promised favourable publicity and provided the tool by which the daily newspaper would be forced to print the story. (The mailing of the cheque signalled dependence upon newspaper coverage which would arouse public disapproval of the landlord's image).

Impromptu Meeting

Late Friday night some of the tenants planned to meet the landlord the next morning when he came to collect rent. By waiting for the landlord to reply to the letter and signify a convenient time and date it seemed to us that the time lag increased his opportunity to prevent direct confrontation. At this meeting the landlord listened to a reading of the ten demands, reiterated his \$20 charge for "wasting his time" and agreed to meet with the tenants on the following Tuesday.

Three days later, two of the tenants present at the surprise meeting received pseudo-eviction notices which fortunately were without legal validity and thus failed to disperse the group.

\$20 Meeting Publicized

On July 21st the Kingston edition of the Canadian Register carried the Montreal Street story. The next day the landlord began his retaliation through the news media. He stated that his reasons for refusing to comply with the list of demands was a long experience with "bad" tenants. The whole statement implied that the tenants on Montreal Street were responsible

for a series of charges ranging from fornication on the stairways to non-payment of rent, to children entering an apartment through their window.

July 2nd the Mayor promised to send a building inspector, and a fire inspector to check the homes from a safety standpoint.

July 24th the tenants spent an afternoon and evening preparing a reply to the landlord's implications.

July 26th the newspaper refused to print the tenants' statement claiming that they would attend the meeting with the landlord and record the events. Attempts to pry the building report away from City Hall were unsuccessful. The Mayor claimed that the individual reports had not been compiled at the time. Although he promised to call in the reports and telephone back the same day, he neglected to contact the tenants then or since that time.

Final Meeting

The tenants had planned to demand an apology and a statement that the charges in the July 22nd statement were made against "bad" tenants in general but not against this group of tenants currently living on Montreal Street. Publicity had aroused the interest of all local news media and the concern of city aldermen, so that when the final confrontation occurred, the whole affair seemed far removed from a simple attempt to extract concessions from a landlord. In fact, the presence of press and aldermen inhibited the tenants from speaking out and presented a threat to the landlord. The result was a dialogue between K.C.P. and an uncompromising landlord. He refused to apologize for the implication that the tenants on Montreal Street were responsible for immoral and irresponsible actions. He agreed that if the tenants kept the backyard clean, the threatened rent increase would not go through, that if the tenants supplied paper and paint for the first two rooms he would provide enough for the remaining rooms, that he would insulate hot water tanks, and that he would make any repairs required by the Building Report.

Retaliation and Press Coverage

July 27th: The day of the meeting the Letters to the Editor section carried a letter by Rev. Oswald who chastized the landlord for the slanderous implications of his July 22nd statement.

July 28th: The Letters to the Editor section carried the tenants' rebuttal.

July 30th: Conclusions of the Fire Department's Inspection Branch and the Building Inspector were printed and the landlord restated his description of bad tenants in general. Conclusions of the report included, "The untidy appearance of the premises is a result of the tenants' neglect as is the broken plaster and window. During the past two years regular inspections of the

property have been carried out, and the owner has co-operated on recommendations made." No comments were made about leaking rooves, crumbling chimneys, sloping floors, insulation, wiring, or fire exits.

July 31st: The landlord printed an ad on the Business page calling for the formation of an Association of Landlords which would maintain files on bad tenants. The same day, Rev. Oswald sought legal advice about a threatened libel suit from the landlord. Rev. Oswald composed another letter to the Editor and sent a copy to the landlord asking him to approve working and content. The landlord has not replied and the letter has not been printed.

August 4th: The landlord wrote a letter to the Editor discrediting Rev. Oswald with ad hominem arguments. In addition an article in the news section reported that the landlord received magnificent support from the other Kingston landlords for his idea of a Landlord's Association.

August 6th: Patrick Sears, a Kingston resident, wrote a letter to the editor supporting the Montreal Street action.

Achievements

To date, the landlord has returned his one effective rent increase to City Welfare and verbally agreed to provide paper and paint to the welfare tenant who previously repaired two rooms. The hot water tanks have not been insulated and the Building Report is still not available to the tenants.

Out of the seven people attending the first meeting, one woman had emerged as an energetic supporter of future issues in a community organization. This has occurred because of her fiery temperament and long experience in fighting material and emotional insecurity. The other people involved are still supporters of action on Housing although they need the stimulus of others to sustain their interest.

Approach to People

The lack of numbers contributed to the fear felt by those who were involved. Given the criterion of majority support for the issue it seems to us that the initial mistake was made in trying to involve new people around housing instead of spending more time explaining the concept of group power used to effect changes in other problem areas. The focus on housing defined the struggle as a personal one between the people and the landlord and caused extreme hostility or fear. It is significant that those with whom such time was spent, remained strongest throughout. Dependence upon news media as an instrument of power underlined the weakness of the active group. Although it was needed as a psychological prop at some stage, the initial use of publicity could have been postponed until more tenants were convinced of the necessity of a confrontation.

TOWARDS BETTER HOUSING

June

During the first week of June, Bron began to work on Charles St. through a contact given us by Rev. Haynes. We were given the name of a young girl who has since moved out of Kingston, who was not herself 'poor', but who gave us introductions to some of Laurenson's tenants (left side of Charles running from Bagot to Rideau). We have developed a strong friendship with one of the families here, but although the houses are in bad condition, there is little motivation for improvement. Some of the reasons for the difficulty in organizing here also apply, to a lesser degree, in other areas:

1. Fear of eviction, especially after the Hewett confrontation. At least one tenant, and probably others, were warned by the landlord not to sign any petitions or have anything to do with us.
2. Dislike and suspicion of neighbours.
3. Those who own their own houses feel superior to their poorer neighbours.

There is a complete absence of community feeling and although we tried to bring together some of the tenants, there was a real antagonism between several tenants. In addition, one family is virtually run by a fifteen year old girl whose mother is seldom home, while another is an old couple. We continued to visit the area, and hoped that the Montreal St. action would provide an example, but the threats of Laurenson were quite effective.

It is difficult to justify our failure here; apart from the reasons given above, the fact that only the four houses owned by Laurenson are in really bad condition meant that strength of numbers could not alleviate fear of action. There was no other issue common to all, and the wide diversity in income made it hard to draw people together. However, several people on this block could be drawn into a larger organization which would give them the support they lack.

Mid-June to Mid-July

During this period, most of our time was spent on Bagot St. between John and Raglan Rds. Housing was the only issue which drew interest from most of the people. Here three landlords, Greenwood, Marcus and Robb divide the area among themselves except for a couple of owner-occupied houses which seem quite out of place on the street. Though the rent in Greenwood's houses is quite low, they are in poor condition. He charges about \$50 for a small three bedroom house (no bathtubs, and in need of many repairs). It was

rumoured that the houses were being sold to Hewett; for this reason we did not try to organize around housing until the change had taken place; we felt it unlikely that a successful action could take place when the landlord was about to sell. However, the sale has not come through. Two women are potential leaders, but there are several difficulties. One tenant is an alcoholic and the others deride him; another will have nothing to do with us for fear of trouble; a third is an elderly couple whose son, who lives with them, has renovated the house himself, and so this couple have no real housing problem.

Robb's tenants are not particularly dissatisfied with anything - there are only four tenants and one of these sub-lets.

The tenants in Marcus' housing were much more promising. Several problems have again arisen:

1. Of the four strongest people, three women work all day, (one shift work); the husband of one is old and deaf, another's works out of town. The fourth woman is pregnant.
2. The conditions of the houses are not bad enough that the tenants feel the necessity of immediate action.
3. Most have enough money that they can do some repairs and painting themselves, and since several have lived here for long periods, have done much necessary work themselves.
4. The landlord threatened the tenants through another tenant in another area, and fear of eviction has caused one person to become very frightened.

Nevertheless, this area is still hopeful, especially because some of the women are good friends and still express interest in action. With children back to school in the fall, giving the women more time we may be able to continue organizing here.

Thus, we decided to ease the pressure for a meeting, but are continuing to visit the people there, talking about general issues as well as housing. As a result, we have several potentially good organizers. Again, these people would be willing to work within a larger organization for rent control, minimum housing standards, and other related issues.

Mid-July

We have continued to maintain contacts in the other areas but have begun to put most of our efforts into houses owned by Mann. We got started in this area by talking to Ron G. of Montreal St. who told us that Mann (his landlord) owned

other houses also in bad condition. There are rumours that the houses are to be condemned, and the welfare department has told one family to move because the houses are unfit to live in. Mr. G. expressed interest in a meeting. We spoke to all the other tenants. Four are very keen, and two more might yet be involved.

We had a meeting and three tenants attended - one other couldn't make it but is still interested. We have since tried to involve the others with the assistance of our present supporters. One lady spoke to the landlady who said she thought the meeting was a good idea, but since then the landlord has approached at least three tenants and told them to have nothing to do with us or they would be given notice.

There is real leadership potential in this group. Although some are reluctant to take issue with Mann too strongly because Mann takes any number of children (they all have large families) they are also interested in action about welfare, rent control, minimum housing standards, etc.

Evaluation

Although we have had little success in centering people around a specific issue, we have been able to develop a core of people interested in many problems. We would like to spend the remainder of the summer and the fall getting the leaders from the various areas together to meet each other and discuss common problems. If we can do this, we will then have a strong core of people ready to branch out into a type of community union organization.

We are already aware that many of the ideas we draw from SDS are not entirely applicable to Kingston poverty. The notion of block organizing is one that was adopted from the SDS and we are not convinced that it works here. In a large city slum or ghetto, the block is probably a closely knit group. This is, of course, not true here. Block organizing does not have the advantage of bringing together people who already feel a bond amongst them, while it also carries with it the disadvantage of small numbers. Our work leads to an estimate that only about half the people who initially express interest in a problem will attend a meeting. This means that fear of action is high and only the 'real fighters' remain strong under pressure. For these reasons we think that the project should, in the future, shift its emphasis from block to area organizing.

This might entail such things as:

1. The opening of an office, possibly a store-front, which would be easily accessible to anyone interested in the project. It would be helpful to have a project member there at all times.

2. Make this office the real home of the project. If emphasis was placed on getting people in the area, (including teenagers, a group we have not even got to know), this would help to end the separation between community people and project people. The group discussions that usually take place in the house should go on here with community people participating.
3. Place emphasis on co-ordinating the leadership which has emerged from block organizing this summer to work on a projec which would involve them all. If the town plan is to be passed early in September as is hoped, now is the time to mount a campaign for a strictly enforced minimum housing standard. Also, there is an opportunity for pressure to be placed on city council for a large increase in low-cost housing, in conjunction with the movement started at Riverview for more control by the occupants of low-cost housing schemes.
4. Place more attention on working conditions or wages which to date we have ignored. For example, working conditions at the hospitals, especially Hotel Dieu, seem to be bad.
5. Experimentation with other methods of organizing, such as an organization of welfare mothers.

The shortage of manpower in the fall will, of course, make these recommendations difficult to implement. However, a campaign for workers from the campus would help to overcome this problem. We intend to continue working in our area during the school year.

Bron Wallace
Peggy Morton
Sue Menard

WHAT MR. T. THINKS OF WELFARE

"For one thing", said this father of eight, "there should be less gab there and more money. I get \$160, a month. \$75 goes for rent. This leaves \$85 a month plus family allowances, which should be used to clothe the children, for food and everything else."

His most significant criticism of welfare, however, centres around the way people on welfare are treated by the administrators: "When you go into her office she gives you a blast and when you leave you're not sure whether to walk through the door or crawl through the crack."

A TENANTS' COUNCIL IN THE LOW-RENTALS

Riverview Court is a block of 71 low-rental units on the outskirts of Kingston. Most were built five years ago - Kingston's first low-rental units. There are fifty housing units - all built in the same style, and two blocks of apartments - all built in the same style - that have twenty-one apartments in them. The units are clean and attractive, and the grounds spacious and well-kept.

Riverview is administered by a Housing Authority of six people, two selected by the Mayor, two by the Provincial Member, and two by the Federal Member. This takes the Housing Authority away from City Hall politics and gives it that necessary objectivity and fairness (so we are told). Yet the Chairman of the Housing Authority, Mrs. M. Earl, also happens to be on the Welfare Committee. None of the members of the Authority is from the north side of Princess St. The Housing Authority decides who lives in Riverview, using as its basic criterion 'the urgency of the need of the applicant'. We know of poor families who have been on the waiting list for five years. How this clause is to be interpreted is the privilege of the Housing Authority. A lengthy lease stipulates in minute detail what can and cannot be done. A Residents' Handbook elaborates on this.

Rent is based on a sliding scale from 22% to 29.6% of gross family income. Children are not taken into account. Rent includes heat. On top of this there is a service charge and whether this equals the value of the services received is very much disputed by the tenants. The highest rent paid by a family at Riverview so far is \$174.

At first we considered Riverview and Rideau Heights outside out working area. But when Alderman Matthews came to dinner we changed our minds. He told us that a Mrs. K. had just received an eviction notice without any reason being given for it. He also gave us the names of three people who were dissatisfied, and who might be interested in forming a tenants' council.

The next day, three of us went up to Riverview. We saw two of the people Alderman Matthews had recommended. Their response was immediate. Two neighbours were called in, and all agreed there was plenty of room for improvement at Riverview. It seemed a very suspicious start.

On July 9, the Whig-Standard reported a court decision to evict Mrs. K. from Riverview. Mr. Matthews called for a stipulation clause, 'one that demanda a reason be given', for a tenant's eviction. Mrs. K. was first contacted July 12 and subsequently seen twice. Her story agreed with the one we heard from Mr. Matthews - that as a condition of entry to Riverview Mrs. K. had signed a document declaring that she would not allow Mr. K., (her common law husband) to live with her at Riverview. Then Mr. K. moved in with her, and the Housing Authority accepted rent from him. Later Mrs. K. received an eviction notice. The Housing Authority never did give her a reason.

By August 8 everyone in the 71 units had been seen (13 said they were not interested). 49 said they were interested and approved the formation of a tenants' council and were willing to attend a meeting to discuss it. At first I had used Mrs. K.'s case to show why a tenants' council was needed. This was too limited. So the functions of the proposed tenants' council were broadened to include acting as a pressure group to improve services at Riverview. But I always emphasized that it was to be their tenants' council and that what it did depended on them. In short, I always pushed the basic project philosophy of people doing things for themselves. Most seemed to agree with this.

The Meeting

Suggestions about what should be done were many: to explore the possibility of electing two people to the Housing Authority or at least two people sitting in on Housing Authority meetings; to find out why rent is based on gross and not net income, what the service charges are for, why number of children is not taken into account in calculating rent, and why the whole of a son's or daughter's income is counted as family income; why they could not choose their own colour schemes and decorations, and build backyard fences; who is responsible for common lawns, fences, etc.; to consider action as a pressure group for a drug-store, a shopping plaza, a clinic, buses on Sunday, a permanent radar trap across from Riverview; to organize a small swimming pool for the children, and a day-care centre or babysitting service.

A meeting was arranged to discuss these and other points. Alderman Matthews had city hall print notices of the meeting. Rev. Thrasher offered the use of St. Matthew's church basement. Nearly everyone was seen again. As before, there were many yeas. A notice was printed, and children at Riverview put one through every letter-box the day before the meeting.

At the meeting on August 15, only three tenants attended, and two others sent reasons for not attending. One of those present had lived in low-rental units in Hamilton, where rents are lower, and the houses better. The tenants there had organized themselves into a vigorous tenants' council - two members sitting in on Housing Authority meetings, a baby-sitting service, entertainments, discussion groups organized. As soon as an effective tenants' council was flourishing, the resentment and antagonism of the middle class area in which they were located evaporated. My method of working was criticized. I should have drawn up an agenda myself and presented it to them. Also, because of the lack of internal leadership, and because the people were so timid, I should have tried to obtain the approval of the Housing Authority. In short- enlightened paternalism.

Evaluation of Method

Because of time and the number of people involved, it was impossible to build a movement based on trust and friendship. Trust and friendship require time. This was not necessarily important. In some ways it seemed good for people tended to talk more about the issues involved. I could say what I was there for, and they gave their support or objections. Their past histories, illnesses, eating, drinking and sleeping habits seldom cropped up. For once, relevancy seemed to be understood. Some seemed to grasp the distinction between troubles and issues: troubles relate to you personally, issues are more social. So some, who said they were happy with the way things are, still managed to grasp and agree to the point that the Housing Authority was theoretically a dictatorship and that a tenants' council could improve Riverview.

I felt I had acquired a certain amount of trust without having to go through the lengthy process of having to live with the people, but you can never be sure you have acquired trust until action and not just talking is required. To grumble and complain is easy, and for some, is one of the joys and mainstays of life. I complain, therefore I am. But there is a dichotomy between words and actions. Actions have consequences and so entail responsibility. Also, working as a group requires trusting others. At Riverview, people do not trust each other. It seems a more common trait of the lower income groups to assent to a proposal sincerely, and yet not follow up the implications of their assent. To agree in word is less embarrassing than to dissent.

Lack of Community

There were difficulties. Some felt they had been corralled together with people from vary different backgrounds. This tended to create class feeling. Those who felt themselves to be 'good citizens' resented being lumped together in the public mind with the less respectable members of society. There was a distinct cleavage between those on welfare and those with jobs. Many had the middle class horror of dirt and bad language and the slightest hint of 'immorality'. For example, a mother refused to allow her children to enter a neighbour's house because they were living common law, although 'their children were good, surprisingly enough' and friends of her children.

It was over children that the antagonisms became pronounced. Those who were trying to bring their children up to be well behaved felt they had to fight against the pernicious elements in Riverview. They also were convinced that the bad win over the good. It only needs a few children to use bad language for all children do eventually fall into that habit. Riverview, it was felt by these, was not place to bring up your children. Children were bound to be a problem in any case. There were too many of them in one small area.

These feelings created a lack of community. There were many common problems, but no history of a co-operative attack on them. Moreover, the lack of privacy (an inevitable concomitant of the way the units were built and designed) instead of creating a community spirit, enhanced privatism. The grape-vine is fast, efficient, and sometimes vicious. Some retreated into themselves to avoid getting caught up in the swell of petty gossip. So everybody knew everything about everyone else, and at the same time did not really know and understand their neighbours.

The Housing Authority

The Housing Authority did not aid a community, co-operative spirit. Its actions were shrouded in mystery. Loath to give reasons for its actions, it fostered suspicion. Inconsistent in what it said and did, it bred mistrust. All-powerful it increased timidity. Bureaucratic, it dampened down the initiative, imagination, and variety essential to the formation of indigenous, co-operative actions. There were conjectures that the Housing Authority acted almost as a patronage body. Suspensions were rife that some among them were 'stood-pigeons', who, to curry favour, would report the slightest item to the Housing Authority. The Housing Authority was no ogre. Many rightly regarded its chairman as a 'lady'. But its negative, closed attitude, its poor public relations, was no help to the problems of Riverview.

Conditions were not bad. Houses were good: the best value for money available in Kingston. People knew this. This led to compliance with the status quo. It is easier to acquiesce, especially as the problems were not readily apparent. Prime facie, it meant perhaps opposing a paternalistic bureaucracy which was administering a necessity of life - housing. The unsatisfactory aspects of living at Riverview were such as to cause grumbling, but not to precipitate action.

General Evaluation

Given these conditions, it was surprising how readily people responded to the idea of a tenants' council. Although as the meeting only too well revealed, yeas and words do not mean yeas and action. The response, however, probably indicates a genuine need. But, timidity prevented that need being satisfied. Also, internal leadership is a necessity. Riverview is remarkable for its lack of leadership. Catalysts cannot act as the grain of sand in the oyster of there is nothing inside the shell.

When working with a large number of people, it is probably best to have a meeting early on. This clears the air and lets you know exactly where you stand. It also helps to reveal more clearly than talking can who the potential leaders are. I tried the traditional method of creating a movement: presenting the idea and arguing about it. However, ideas are like seeds; they take time to grow. To create a tenants' council at Riverview will require more time, determination, and persistence. Leaders should be developed for each row of houses, and if possible small meetings of those living in the same housing row should be held before a large general meeting. With persistence, Riverview will have a tenants' council.

Philip O'Brien

QUOTES FROM RIVERVIEW

Mrs. Marsland says: "Sunday night was a very poor night to hold a meeting for a lot of people were away. Also there are too many people on welfare here, and they do not want to become involved. There was nothing specific to go to a meeting about. We did not have a specific goal."

Mr. Revelle says: "The tenants' council is a good idea. A lot of people here require a drugstore and a shopping centre. We pay 60¢ a dozen for grade A medium eggs. You can get grade A large eggs for 49¢ at Bennett's. Entertainments could be organized and held in a church hall or the auditorium of the school here. Sunday night was a bad night for a meeting."

Mrs. Groux says: "A tenants' council is a good idea except you could not get someone from out here not to sit on the housing authority. What they do need when they build new low-rental units is soundproof of floors, and that everyone should be treated equal."

Mr. Running says: "It is a great idea. It accomplishes much by opening up a lot of people's eyes."

ONTARIO STREET REPORT

The Playground

Sally first entered the Ontario Street Area about June 26. Housing was too grave an issue to begin with for the people in the area were well used to being firmly held down under the thumb of one of the three or four landlords which controlled the area.

Further along Ontario towards West Street a vacant lot facing a row of houses presented an easy topic for conversation with the tenants. The residents of Lower Union had for a long while been eying this lot as a possibility for a playground for their young children. About July 4 we met Mrs. Parker, a tenant at 34 Lower Union. She proved to be the prime mover in getting the playground.

Although all the people who lived in the area were spoken to it was Mrs. Parker and her immediate neighbours who were most enthusiastic. A week later a preliminary meeting was held at Mrs. Parker's, attended by some of the residents of the Lower Union and Ontario Street area. This meeting proposed another meeting open to more of the people in the area to be held on Monday, July 19, at St. George's Church. Mrs. Parker phoned the district alderman, Mr. Cook, and invited him to the meeting. This was the first call he had ever received from the Ontario St. Area.

At the time we felt guilty about contacting the owner of the lot ourselves rather than having the people do it themselves. After a negative reply with his lot, we sought out two alternatives and armed with this, the residents met Alderman Cook at the meeting at St. George's.

He was enthusiastic at this meeting and suggested that a delegation representing the concerns of the neighbourhood should attend the meeting of the Parks and Recreation Committee at the Richardson Bath House the following evening. Sally and Mrs. Parker drafted a request the following afternoon.

The meeting at the bathhouse was a success. Mr. Cook read the request for the delegation of three residents and one member of the community project. Mr. Webb of the Parks and Recreation Committee was impressed with the scheme and promised to negotiate for the lot.

The plan was that the lot would be loaned to the residents of the area for the summer if they would supervise it. There was no guarantee of getting any equipment from the city for this summer.

About four days later Mrs. Parker was informed that one of the lots had been obtained and that the city was willing to clear the land and supply the equipment if the residents were willing to supervise the playground. A schedule for supervision has been drawn up but the city has delayed in obtaining the equipment.

The success of this venture perhaps hinged upon two things. First the non-observance of the 'project rule' that the people must initiate all action. In some of the cases the people might have hesitated to make some of the moves that the project organizers could make more conveniently. Mrs. Parker, however, initiated the majority of the moves. The second was the fact that this was an issue in which the people had nothing to lose and hence could act with confidence that they were not risking their home or the welfare of their families. The Rideau experience provided some help and warned us against inadvertently ignoring the aldermen in this action.

The following is a letter from two of the residents in the Ontario St. area which was printed in the SUPA Newsletter.

Letter From Kingston

On July 4, two Queen's students came to my door. Now I live at 34 Lower Union across from a scruffy looking vacant lot. They talked to me and asked me if I had ever thought of making this lot into a playground for young children. I said that we had thought of it but we hadn't known what to do about it. Now these Queen's students suggested that we get as many parents who were interested to a meeting at my home.

One week later a meeting was held attended by a large group of parents. At this meeting we decided to approach Mr. Cook, the local alderman, and so decided upon another meeting held in a church hall four days later. This meeting proved to be successful. Now at the meeting we decided to approach the owner of the lot. He turned us down, the *%\$/ rat.

The parents of the district, together with the Community Project put together a brief which the alderman, the parents and the students presented to the director of parks and recreation, Mr. Webb. Alderman Webb felt this was a good thing and consequently we obtained permission to open a playground. All we needed now was the land on which to open.

Now Mr. Cook approached Mr. Sutton, manager of Kingston Shipyards. Mr. Sutton informed us that he had a vacant lot which he would gladly lend to the residents for use as a tiny tots playground. Mr. Webb then agreed to supply us with equipment from the city. We are to supply our own supervisors for the remainder of this summer.

The parents agreed to donate their own time towards the supervising along with the help of the KCP. We the parents of this area wish to take this opportunity to thank the students of the KCP for their instigation, help and co-operation in obtaining our tiny tots playground.

Yours truly,
Mrs. P. Parker
Mrs. G. Ackley

The Upchurch Situation

During our involvement with the community about the playground, we met the Upchurches and soon learned of the injury of their two year old son, Cecil. Cecil had fallen through a hole in the railing of the common access stairway leading to the Upchurch's former apartment. His injuries were such that Cecil spent six weeks in traction at Hotel Dieu Hospital and another three weeks in a large cumbersome cast.

The Upchurches, who were on welfare, had not considered suing the landlord. The landlord, Mr. Cecil Smith, seemed a rather powerful man to tangle with. Nonetheless, after the cast was removed, the possibility of Cecil's walking being permanently impaired was presented. They felt the financial pressure enough to attempt a lawsuit.

About July 22, a reporter from "The Canadian Register" became aware of the situation and on his own initiative took pictures of the scene of the accident. Because of Cecil's injury, the Upchurches had moved to an apartment on the ground floor of the building adjoining the former hotel in which the accident had occurred. This was rented by the same landlord. Since Mr. Upchurch showed the reporter the scene of the accident, the landlord gave him verbal notice of eviction.

When the news broke that the reporter was intending to do a full story on the Upchurch case, the landlord verbally declared that if the story were printed he would evict all his tenants in both buildings. The Upchurches felt that their story should be printed. The story appeared in "The Canadian Register" replete with pictures on July 31.

The landlord made no formal move towards eviction but no longer extended credit to the Upchurches at his store. Meanwhile the project members had spoken to Mr. Cartwright of the Legal Aid Society. He stated that pending a medical report on the state of young Cecil he would accept the case himself. As it turned out Cecil did begin to walk and the legal case then became extraneous.

Here again the project members were obliged to initiate most of the action. The fear felt among the tenants was very evident. Perhaps our personal attention towards the Upchurch family could have precipitated an action in which the landlord and tenant would have been forced to meet each other under the impartial scrutiny of the law. But if this is not rationalization for our individual concern, it is certainly mere speculation. There was no guarantee that this token victory over the landlord would lead to a uniting of the tenants to obtain their legal rights. Nonetheless, by simply trying to persuade people to get together, there seemed little hope. They were easily divided against themselves by their personal and understandable fear of eviction.

Conclusions

The playground effort on Ontario Street was fairly successful as far as community organizing is concerned. The people of Ontario Street now have a playground. They got it themselves. As further evidence of their success as a community the leadership of this area are now preparing a project on their own to secure a traffic school-crossing guard at a busy corner for the fall.

Reasons for the success of this venture we would list as follows: first, the issue was riskless enough and popular enough to gain almost unanimous support in the area; secondly the acquisition of the playground space was an easy enough venture as to ensure a certain victory for the residents in their novice attempt at community effort; thirdly, in this area there was already great leadership potential which could be easily stimulated to action.

The main recommendation for a more successful action of a similar kind in a similar area is to establish a closer relationship with the people in the area before attempting to stimulate some sort of community action on their part. We found on Ontario Street that the co-operation of the people was directly proportionate to the closeness of our relationship with them. Mrs. Parker and the Upchurches with whom we had developed the securest bond of pure friendship have been the most active participants in the project.

Bill Martin, Sally Clendenning

LITTLE PARK NEAR WATER POSSIBILITY

(from the Whig-Standard, July 21, 1965)

"Another playground may have been found for downtown children who have no recreational area. It is a fenced-in lot measuring 100 by 100 feet on land leased by Kingston Shipyards from the city.

"Ald. W.T. Cook and a group of residents on the waterfront came up with the scheme after the parents surveyed the district for a suitable site. Shipyards approval will be sought today.

"Parks and property committee gave approval Tuesday, with the understanding the parents would be responsible for providing whatever supervisors are necessary for the playground."

Editors Note: This was five weeks ago - the city still has not installed the equipment. The volunteer supervisors are still waiting.

HOW DID WE BEGIN TO ORGANIZE?

How did we first begin to organize? How did we meet people? How did we develop community leaders? These were the questions most asked this summer.

At first we were hampered by the fact that we did not live right in the 'poor' area. Some of our contacts were made through area ministers etc., but there came a time when we had to start 'pounding the blocks' and meet 'those people' on our own.

Each of the KCP members, of course, had a different approach; each became acquainted with the people in their area in a different way. I can only speak from my own experience, and, for me, this aspect of community organizing meant simply 'making friends' (however 'folksy' that little phrase may seem). It meant sitting in countless kitchens, drinking endless cups of coffee, doing a lot of talking - and a lot more listening. The first person on a block was usually met casually - a woman on a doorstep or a man watering his lawn. A smile, a greeting, a few general questions about the area that any newcomer would ask, and if one was lucky, he or she 'opened up' and talked - about himself, his home, his landlord, his problems, everything. Then I would tell him a bit about myself and the project. At this point one could sometimes tell by the reactions if it would be possible to push further at this point. Some were skeptical, some were uninterested, a few were insulted. Others caught up the idea almost immediately. Those who did were usually ready to give more details about themselves; worries they had about their marriage, their boyfriend, and criminal record, and to supply us with a few names of neighbours who might be interested.

After this initial meeting we followed up these leads, usually using our first contact's name as an introduction. Then it was a matter of going back day after day, of trying to relate problems among neighbours and of trying to find a common issue. After this was accomplished, we could begin the actions described in other reports.

Of course, nothing was accomplished over-night. Often we had to start 'cold' in a block - and begin knocking on door after door. The reactions varied from occasional refusal to a warm reception. Generally we were received with friendship and interest mingled with curiosity.

We learned that it takes a long time to form strong relationships: the block reports give evidence of the many times 'our friends' let us down. Often it was frustrating to spend days playing with children and gossiping with housewives; chances of organizing a movement seemed at times non-existent. As we became more involved in the area, however, we began to realize how important these little things were - and we realized too, that we enjoyed this part of our work.

Although this approach is painstakingly slow at times, and large-scale results are still far in the future, it is now a matter of working with friends in many cases. We know new who we can rely on, we know where the strength of a particular block lies, we know who we can count on to lead in an action. We have made a beginning - and we can continue to build from it together.

Bron Wallace

ANOTHER APPROACH TO ORGANIZING

We first entered the Chatham St. Area about mid-June. The focal point was originally a row of tenements of a truly 'slum' cast. However, upon closer inspection, these homes (and homes they were) proved to be blessed and overlooked by a most benevolent landlord. By the standards of the 'project philosophy' at the stage it was then in, this discovery was a bitter disappointment indeed.

The next day was more encouraging with the discovery of a family who definitely had landlord grievances. However, to quote the project jargon then prevalent, 'the area remained undefined' and so for the next two weeks a little game was played between the two block organizers and the 'block'. The organizers looked for a defined problem and the block refused to yield one.

These weeks saw title searches to try and find potentially evil landlords (for any landlords who owned two houses on a block were by definition EVIL). Streets with poor looking housing were checked but alas, the tenants seemed complacent. This, coupled with the organizers' difficulties in finding a confident approach to the people, made these two weeks a hell on earth. 'Hello Madam, do you have any problems???'

Perhaps the last straw came on the evening when a block family invited us in and served us quantities of beer or at least enough to lull us into a state of euphoria seldom experienced (in such a form) outside the middle class. They were beyond help. These people covered up by pretending they did not need help.

In conclusion, the Chatham St. area was a confusion of many elements giving the overall picture of being a rather 'complacent' lower middle class district in typically middle class torpor - being unaware of the problems which surround them.

Bill Martin
Sally Clendenning

"POOR PEOPLE"

"How would you describe poor people?" A reporter asked the project this question one day and never got what she would call a straight answer. By that time we had learned that a snap definition or description of the poor is meaningless.

Easy definitions became a problem for me as soon as I made a few friends in the community. I knew that they were different from myself but that this difference was just a difference and not a sign of inferiority. Too often when people talk of the poor or the working class they use terms with a pejorative connotation.

Generally I would describe the life of the poor as more immediate, tangible and concrete. This concreteness is readily apparent in the language. The abstract generalities of my vocabulary may be meaningful and precise to you and I, but not so to the poor. They live, think and speak in concrete particulars. "The kid who got hit down the street" means more to them than "a high incidence of traffic accidents involving children." But to dismiss this as uneducated and hence inferior is to misunderstand it. We use abstracts because we relate to our environment in that way; similarly, the poor use the concrete and the particular because they live that way.

When my abstract language was not understood I could have said, as many people do, that the poor are ignorant and can't understand anything. This is like saying that a person speaking French is stupid because I only understand English. Rather than considering their way of expressing themselves to be ignorant, I found that a lot of problems are not really difficult to handle once stripped of the abstractions. The negative side of such a concrete language is the difficulty you have in trying to convey an abstract idea like a community organization; then again this may have just been my inability to use their language well.

The manner of poor people is just as straightforward as is their language. They usually say what they think rather than what they think they should say. Because of this I have heard it said that poor people are crude, unmannerly, or vulgar. To me, they are honest. You know where you stand. The negative aspect of this is that it can often hurt, at least in the short run.

This honestly shows itself in another way - true generosity. They give when they feel like giving and only then. The pattern in other levels of society seems to be to give when you think you should, and if you receive something, you must return the favour; often in both cases the act is contrary to your real wishes. This had led people to say that the poor are ungrateful. From the point of view of the poor, the person who gives, expecting something in return is

"two-faced."

At one time I considered the poor to be short-sighted and irresponsible in not providing for the future; for example, spending money soon after they got it, having children before they could afford them, etc. But looking at it from their point of view, such actions are simply realistic. If you continually face the prospect of being unemployed, planning or saving for the future is wasted effort. The future is largely a luxury enjoyed by other levels of society.

This emphasis on the immediate can be seen in many poor people's attitudes to education. 'It is good, if would be nice to have a lot of it, but its better to get out and get a job. An honest day's work is better than sitting around reading books.' Because the formal learning process stops at sixteen or seventeen, the poor are considered to be not very intelligent. After a summer of listening to 'educated' people and poor people in equal amounts, I think the problem is not one of the latter being less intelligent or wise, but simply their mode of expression being less acceptable.

I have not really tries here to describe or define the poor. I only wanted to show that many of the adjectives traditionally applied to the poor are better taken as indications of the limitations of the person using them.

Dennis McDermott

" WHAT DO THE TENANTS SAY? "

(A letter to the editor, Whig-Standard, from a Children's Aid official)

Sir: I have followed with interest the Whig-Standard's coverage of the dispute between a group of Montreal St. tenants and their landlord, Mr. John G. Hewett. In the issue of July 22, your paper interviewed Mayor Fray on the subject. In the issue of July 23, Mr. Hewett was given ample column inches to express (somewhat in the style of James Joyce) his opinion, not only with regard to the specific complaints of the tenants, but also with regard to the behaviour of his tenants. Notable by its absence has been any inclusion of interviews with the tenants who brought this matter to Kingston's attention. The reason I bring this up is that in matters concerning those living in deprived circumstances, this is so often the case. The dialogue seems to go on at all levels except at the level of thos directly affected. The Whig has palyed a leading role in bringing the matter of Kingston's poverty to the attention of Kingston's citizens. It has told us of the presentation of briefs

on this subject to the Community Welfare Council and of the Mayor's Committee on Poverty and Housing. However, we seldom hear what the people who actually live in these circumstances think and feel and desire insofar as an improved way of life is concerned.

For the first time, to my knowledge, people from a poverty pocket of Kingston have chosen to act as a group, and make these things known. Let us value their efforts to "help themselves" (as is so often requested by the middle class) and hear more about the action on that level rather than just predictable statements from the establishment.

Yours sincerely,

(Mrs.) Lavada Pinder.

POLITICS AND POVERTY

An our prospectus we defined poverty as "chronic dependency" and political powerlessness. Whether or not these abstractions are the correct ones, here in concrete terms is what we mean.

Robert Steacy, 3, was the only youngster in the Polson Park suburb to be struck by a motor vehicle this year. A neighbourhood petition received immediate response from City Hall and heavy traffic was re-routed.

At that time 6 youngsters had been hit on Rideau St. and one had died. The city took a traffic survey. The Rideau St. petition resulted in a delapidated fence, two signs and increased police patrols. Stop signs, crossing guards and traffic lights were rejected as being too expensive. Two months later \$14,000 was invested in traffic lights on Division St. At Brock and at Johnson, a scene of many accidents but fewer than on Rideau.

John Hewett forced his tenants to pay \$20 to discuss their grievances, many of which he accepted as legitimate. The Whig at first refused to accept even an advertisement from the tenants, and consistently refused to publish their complaints but printed a half-page statement from Hewett. For three weeks Mayor Fray has ignored the tenants requests for the city inspectors reports, but Hewett published part of one in a letter discrediting the tenants.

Similarly, the playground equipment promised by the city six weeks ago for the Ontario St. park still has not been installed. The kids go back to school this week.

It seems that some people get things done faster than others.

Don Carmichael

THE KCP AND THE PUBLIC

The first six weeks of the project were spent mainly doing research. In doing research, we utilized local sources such as assessment records, and municipal planning reports at City Hall, and staff of health and welfare agencies. This was probably the quickest and most efficient way of making ourselves known to and getting to know Kingston officials. This, however contributed to the later very persistent view that we were doing a survey of Kingston poverty. At this stage our approach to public relations was completely haphazard and unco-ordinated. We made no attempt to discover the possible reactions of aldermen, press, radio and TV. This was understandable - though short-sighted - for our primary concern was getting into the community in which we were going to work.

After the Rideau St. meeting - our first publicity - the need to clarify our public image was felt. We had learned by bitter experience our first lesson in public relations. At the KCP meeting of June 25, the internal structure of the project was changed. Three people were put permanently in charge of public relations, fund-raising and research.

City Hall

Our first contact with the aldermen was an unexpected meeting over the Rideau St. petition. Relations between ourselves and Alderman Webb of St. Lawrence Ward and Alderman Bennett of Cataraqui were strained. Attempts were made to have another meeting with the local aldermen. Alderman Webb regarded us as "shit-disturbers" (praise indeed) but agreed to meet with us, although eventually he came to regard us in a more favourable light and even came to us with a problem he had over a sub-standard house in his area. Hutch regarded our role as a liaison between the people and City Hall. He attempted to postpone the printing of the prospectus until he arranged a meeting between the KCP, the aldermen, and other influential people. Nothing came of either attempt.

We had learned by then not to antagonize the aldermen. So Alderman Cook of Sydenham was seen; Alderman Watts of Sydenham, and Alderman Vermette of St. Lawrence contacted, and an interview was arranged with Mayor Fray. At the meeting with the Mayor, three other Aldermen were present: Aldermen Bennett, Bruce and Travers. We told them what we were doing, and then questioned the Mayor on his War on Poverty and on Welfare. The Mayor seemed cordial and not unsympathetic to us. Alderman Bennett also seemed to understand better our project's aims and was less antagonistic. However, although we had explained to him twice that we had nothing to do with it, he accused us of being 'instigators' of the second traffic petition on Rideau St.

We were furious and asked for a public apology. Then we all left for Grindstone Island, and when we came back he was not around for the next few days. The issue was quietly dropped.

Alderman Matthews of Cataraqui came for dinner on July 5. Rev. Good was present, and a lively exchange took place between them. Alderman Matthews interested us in Riverview, and later proved to be generally helpful. Frequent attempts were made to see Alderman Hare, Chairman of the Committee on Welfare and Housing. We finally saw him on July 19. He spoke at great length but little of use was garnered from him. We attended two council meetings, put ourselves on the mailing list for the minutes of the council, and visited many City Hall officials for information at one time or another.

Press, Radio, and TV

Publicity was important. After our first bad dose of it, we attempted to establish good relations between us and the communications media. The Whig-Standard files were used extensively during the research period, and the circulation manager gave us four free copies of the Whig every day for our own filing purposes. R. A. O'Brien, the editorial page editor, came to dinner. He knew little about the 'in' politics of Kingston, but was an excellent conversationalist, and we talked of everything from French Canada to Henry Miller. Alan Dickie, one of the Whig's reporters, wrote a five-part series of articles on Kingston poverty which helped to keep debate alive. Mr. Soutter, the Whig's news editor, showed little interest in what we were doing.

The Whig-Standard had been unwilling or possibly afraid to print the names of landlords. The Montreal St. tenants were loath to confront their landlord without some backing besides the KCP. Alan Dickie was asked to help but refused. Help came from an unexpected quarter - the Canadian Register. They gave us \$20 to pay Hewett's fee for a meeting, and decided to publish the story as soon as Hewett accepted the money. On July 21 the story was released on the front page of the Canadian Register. It was picked up by other papers almost immediately. The story made the front page of the Globe and Mail, albeit with some of the facts wrong.

Hewett's name as the 'man who charged his tenants \$20 to come to a meeting' was known across the country. Hewett's reply came in the Whig-Standard of July 22 - a long, vicious, personal account of all the difficulties he had experienced as a landlord. The Whig-Standard had obviously attempted to play down the Hewett story. But as soon as other papers carried the story, and local radio stations broadcast it, they could not ignore it. However, their account completely ignored the tenants' side. Hewett and Mayor Fray were quoted

but no effort had been made to contact the tenants. A reply was necessary. After long consultation with the tenants concerned, the tenants' statement was sent to the Whig. Mr. Soutter refused to print it. But the assistant editorial page editor agreed to print most of it as a letter which would appear after the meeting with Hewett. At the tenants' meeting with Hewett, press, radio, and TV were conspicuous by their numbers. All accounts of the meeting were fair.

Dick Barrett, CKLC, was first met at the Rideau St. meeting. He impressed us then with his patience, objectivity, and sympathy. He met with us much later so we could explain more fully what we were doing.

CKWS was not contacted until after the Hewett meeting. Floyd Patterson was invited to dinner; so far he has been too busy to come. Don McCrae of CKWS-TV discussed a television program for the fall.

Tom Kosh of the CBC visited the project of July 26. He returned with a camera crew on August 26 to film us as part of Compass, 65, (to appear on Sept. 12). He stayed for two days. While filming a poor family the local police investigated and gave him trouble. His handling of this won very quickly the support and trust of the family.

Heather Mitchell of the Toronto Daily Star wrote a human interest story on the project in the August 17 edition. Remarks which several project members had unwittingly made to Heather about personal family matters were included, to the chagrin of both parents and project members.

The Star Weekly, which contributed \$100 to the KCP sent down Mrs. Dorothy Sangster to do a general article on 'who are Canada's poor?' We helped her by introducing her to people and recounting our experiences and conclusions. Her article will appear shortly.

Letters to the editor also afforded us support. Mr. Lavada Pinder, Rev. Oswald, Patrick Sears, and others wrote supporting letters. The only letters in Hewett's defence were written by John G. Hewett. It seemed that Kingstonians were on our side.

After the first article by the Canadian Register, more followed. Several pictures and stories of dilapidated housing have appeared: each named a specific landlord. This made the Register's coverage of Kingston poverty superior to the Whig-Standard's. The Register also seemed to lack the paternalistic approach of the Whig.

Churches

The churches proved to be our greatest ally in Kingston. Most were interested and sympathetic. Rev. Good of St. Paul's, an outspoken exponent of the necessity of action on Kingston poverty, came to dinner on July 5. He later appeared on a local television program and praised the project's work. The first really important meeting with the clergy was a gathering of five clergy to acquaint them with the project and also to enlist their aid in fund-raising. Rev. Walsh and Rev. McAvoy of the Roman Catholic Church, Dean Fleming and Rev. Findlater of the Anglican Church and Rev. Oswald of the Lutheran Church attended on July 13. They agreed to fund-raise for us. Rev. Findlater sent a letter to all Kingston churches asking them to help us. Response so far, particularly from the Roman Catholic Churches, which have now raised \$700, has been very good. Many churches have also offered us the use of their halls, gestetners, etc. We never really involved the churches as much as we could, and should, have.

The University

The University was at first regarded as our greatest ally. Some staff helped us with research; Professor Ryan, who had agreed to help us with legal matters, readily did so whenever he had the time. Apart from Professor Ryan's continuing help, contact with staff largely ended when the research was finished. The university keeps aloof from Kingston politics and life, except where they are directly concerned.

Visitors

Visitors were frequent. Most were connected with SUPA and other student organizations. Students from McGill, Toronto and Western, and Pat Kenniff, president of Canadian Union of Student, visited the project to discuss the feasibility of establishing similar projects in other communities. CUS has translated our prospectus and distributed it as a working paper to all delegates to the CUS Congress this month. It also plans to distribute this report. Stewart Goodings of the Company of Young Canadians and two members of the special planning secretariat of the War On Poverty visited the project for exchanges of ideas and information.

Conclusions

The need for public relations was felt because we were presented by the news media as a group conducting a survey. This we thought was damaging. However, by meeting the press and others before any action, we perhaps undercut our philosophy of people speaking and doing for themselves. We worried more about our public image than necessary. We overestimated the effect of misrepresentation of us in the poor community.

Philip O'Brien

GENERAL EVALUATION

The following is a summary evaluation of some of the main problems the project faced as a group.

Value of Academic Research

Statistics provide valuable ammunition for a prospectus used to attract financial and moral support for the idea of community organizing as a method of attacking poverty. The information introduces project members to the social, economic, and political structure of the city, and provides an awareness of the organizations and individuals who might support the concept of community organizing. Research also suggests potential issues.

The disadvantage of spending time and energy on research is that it delays integration into the community. For example, title searching (who owns what houses) and tabulation of this, demanded the efforts of a minimum of four people over a period of ten days. Some members could be chosen early to do this initial research before the project begins. Sources such as the DBS Census, municipal planning reports, and officials of social service agencies provide sufficient information for the type of general research required for action.

Prospectus

It was hoped that in writing a prospectus, ideology and method would be clarified, with the completed report to be used for the purposes of publicity and fund-raising.

Although the prospectus fulfilled the second function, the actual writing of the prospectus failed to provide much clear direction. Furthermore, the extended time length required for the writing and rewriting of criticism of traditional solutions to poverty, ideals, and method, further postponed attempts to contact individuals in the community and select the geographical area in which to work.

In retrospect, we recognize that we consumed more time than was necessary to rewrite, mimeograph, and mail out the prospectus accompanied by fund-raising letters. This endeavour received priority over integration into the community. Administrative mistakes contributed to time wastage. For the prospectus we appointed two editors and allotted each section to two or more people. We have attempted to avoid the same confusion in compiling the summer's report by appointing one editor and one person per section.

The extended time length in writing the prospectus was due to a confusion over definitions of methods of organizing. In an attempt to reach a common viewpoint on criticisms of

traditional solutions and a uniform methodological approach we spent hours in theoretical discussions. This confusion was to be expected since no one had penetrated the area, and no one had experience in a project of this kind. Theoretical discussions are more profitable after a month's practical experience.

Integration

The task of composing a prospectus and distributing it to prospective supporters also provided us with a rationalization for remaining within the security of a familiar situation instead of reaching out to strangers in the poor community. This fear of approaching people was due to a natural hesitancy to initiate conversation with strangers or to intrude upon the privacy of their homes. Also, emphasis was placed on stimulating people to act so we feared that a bad reception meant personal failure. After a few attempts we were encouraged by friendly reactions instead of the anticipated indifference or hostility. The problem soon changed to an inability to choose a specific geographical area in which to work. Even though many contacts were made, it took us a month to select our specific blocks and establish a pattern for visiting the same block each day.

Housing conditions provide an external, material indication of poverty. In Kingston, the sub-standard housing was scattered throughout the eighty block area in groups of two or three blocks, with some blocks containing a mixture of standard and sub-standard houses. There were no clearly defined ghettos. A general guideline for the selection of a block area was the evidence of research on housing, traffic, welfare, crime, and education. When imposed upon a city map, the deliniation of poverty areas directed project members towards specific streets. However, with the assumption that group action required participation of most of the residents of a specific city street, there was pressure to select a street with the most potential for action. Research had suggested that housing conditions would be the issue causing most concern. Faced with the scattered location of slum housing, we postponed selection.

Methods

A project needs methodological direction and connections in the community in order to begin action. The initial mistake was in trying only one of the methods of community organizing used by SDS in the United States. It is not a good idea to accept uncritically methods used by other groups, for these may not be applicable to one's particular situation. It is also a mistake not to utilize the experience of others. Serious discussion of the methods and ideas of other groups should

lead to experimentation and originality. We lacked both and tried only block organizing. Although it is helpful to have a precedent, it is necessary to recognize that method arises out of the particular situation and to avoid the paralysis resulting from an attempt to find the situation which fits the model.

Suggested methods of reducing the fear of personal contact with the people in the community are to bring in experienced organizers at the beginning of the project and work with them. Part-time jobs as waitresses, window-washers, construction workers, etc. provide informal introductions to the community. A full-time worker in the area during the year would alleviate the problems of getting to know people. If at all possible, project workers should not come in to the project 'cold' but should have spent some time during the year making friends in the area.

Internal Structure

After the first six weeks of the project we decided upon a division of labour through the organization into a group of eight block organizers and a trio with separate jobs of public relations, fund-raising, and research. The structure defined areas of responsibility and reduced duplication of efforts. Since experience has proved that the amount of work involved in each job does not prevent each member from participation in other fields, this separation should be made at the beginning of the project. The danger is that individuals will be accepting these functions on the basis of preconceived notions of the demands of the job. There should be provision made for an exchange of functions after experience tests the interests and talents of each member.

The structure came too late to completely eradicate behaviour patterns established during the confusion of the first few weeks. There should be a rigid structure for office and domestic administration, the writing of reports, and research. These should be established at the beginning of the project. In these facets of administration, group pressure is legitimate and essential. But rigidity is out of place in organizing work where each member of the project should be allowed and encouraged to experiment as he sees fit.

This statement was prepared by Diana Stewart in consultation with the other project members. Ed.

A DECENTRALIZED STRUCTURE

The Central Problem

This summer we worked for four months under a central project system with common living, eating and working arrangements. Many of the major problems we had can be seen as effects of this central association. The basic idea of communal living for project workers must be challenged.

This summer's experience shows the main problem to be the development of a "counter-community" - a community of project members centered around each other and actually hampering the development of the organization that members were trying to develop. People became more committed to the project as a project rather than to the community they were trying to develop.

There is an initial fear of moving into the area and organizing the need to organized chores, research, fund raising, and other jobs and the desire to have a common view provided a ready escape for project workers worried about block organizing. A communal structure facilitated this escape and too much time was spent in meetings and discussions trying to organize ourselves into a common position.

With a large group simple tasks such as housekeeping and dish-washing become major chores. Other jobs are even harder and the achievement of a common position is relatively impossible.

Group pressure is strong. Where no one really knows exactly what to do this pressure enforces inaction rather than challenging people to act.

Frustration at not being successful block organizers mounts. People see each other for hours each day as they try to hash out common positions in lengthy meetings. When a group is tied by common inaction and insecurity, mistrust of each others' goals and abilities develop. Long meetings in both frustrating and trying situations intensify hostility between project members.

Even when people do get out and organize in an area they are still bound by the central structure of the project. The group has a tendency to regulate the work of people in a specific area either overtly or by subtle pressure. Considering this it is understandably difficult to become committed to the people on the blocks.

A central group also makes it difficult to link up separate areas and build a large movement. The organization for the movement has already been set up as the community project.

Unfortunately the structure of the project maximizes relationships between project workers and minimizes contact between local people in different areas.

An Alternative

I feel that many of these problems cannot effectively be approached within a central project. Thus another alternative must be found. The idea of dividing the project is one we strongly suggest for consideration by others.

The basic idea is to break up the project into three or four groups of two to four people. Each group would choose an area to work in and make their own living arrangements within the area. They could live singly in rooms or in apartments.

Organizers would then be in closer contact with the local people. They would be more likely to become committed to the area than to a central project. Their day would revolve around the area and contacts would become easier and more natural.

Domestic problems would be eliminated. Living and eating arrangements are much easier for three people than for a group of ten or more. Complex organization is no longer required here. In addition the problem of privacy is removed and if people want to get away from the confines of their area they can always go and visit a friend working in another area.

Extra jobs such as fund-raising or research should be structured. Each job could be allotted to one of the different groups, or more specifically to an individual in these groups. This would probably be more efficient than a central project attempting to handle all tasks.

Organizing should be unstructured and should have two aims--

preliminary aim - integration into the area and the development of small groups of concerned leaders.

primary aim - link up with leaders in other areas to develop a larger movement.

The preliminary aim removes the necessity of using a common organizing approach. Decentralization makes it easier for unilateral action to be taken. People could work on a specific issue to issue basis, or work through the natural growth of acquaintances, or combine the two methods.

In this way, communication between project workers in different areas would in fact be a link between the two areas. In particular, a person visiting a friend in another area could bring someone from his area with him. With no central

structure direct contact would be easier.

The overview would arise as people from different areas shared experiences and tried to join up their blocks in some way.

Irritation with fellow project workers would not develop. When project members are not in constant association, friendships are likely to continue rather than be worn down by pressure and insecurity. Friendly visits and trips to the pub may even be the rule rather than the exception.

It is necessary to discover a way to reduce the initial fear of contacting people in the community. When the person you intend to meet lives next door or down the street, the whole area does not seem like such a frightening unknown variable as it is when you live a few blocks away isolated by the group you live with.

Experienced people who will demonstrate how to integrate and organize by taking the initiative and going in themselves will help to break this fear. A full time staff member making contacts for approximately two months before the project starts will be helpful.

Experiences which alleviate the fear of block organizing will be shared by the few people living and working in an area. Since experiences will be much more immediate in a small group the effect will be more powerful and the development of confidence more probable.

Project members derive stimulation and direction from sharing experiences and discussing problems. This need is further answered through impromptu visits between members in different areas. In addition, project members could spend a day working with another member in their area after the growth of interested community people indicated the beginning of a large movement.

Another basic problem of this approach is the cost. Although communal living may add to inefficiency it is economical. A solution to this would be to give workers an allowance which covers their housing and leave the rest to them to raise through part time jobs. The time gained over the communal living approach could be used for these jobs. Furthermore, jobs give the organizer more legitimacy in an area. It can also be a good place to make contacts, as most people in the area would have the same type of job that a student could get part time.

Meetings could be held early to exchange information. However, too much structure on the people working in different areas would be a move towards "counter-community" and impede the development of the movement. I would suggest that

meetings should be held when they can involve community people and when areas are developed to the extent that they are becoming interested in linking up.

The purpose and role of a director was a problem this summer. With this method a director would not really be necessary.

The problem of the length of time organizers should stay still remains. The only guideline to give on this is that at least one person working in each area should intend to stay longer than the summer as this long-term approach removes the pressure to produce results in a 3 month time limit.

Henceforth this will be our approach.

Tony Tugwell

THE FUTURE OF THE PROJECT

The Kingston Community Project will continue this winter with a staff of three full-time organizers; and a number of part-time workers from the community and the Queen's University campus.

Next May, the project's full-time operations will be expanded to involve the students joining for the summer.

Inquiries should be addressed to:

The Kingston Community Project,
c/o Queens' University Post Office,
Kingston, Ontario.

FROM A FRIEND

I have had the privilege of association with the Kingston Community Project and have followed their activities with a great deal of interest. I was particularly pleased with the workmanship manner that brought forth their first report and I am eagerly looking forward to the next and final report of the summer. I would particularly commend these reports to social workers, municipal officials, businessmen, labour leaders, and all who are concerned about the social problems of our community. I commend highly the diligence, zeal, and sacrifice that went into this project by the students involved. It is my earnest hope that this project will find support both morally, socially, and financially from all segments of the community. I hope this project will grow to the benefit of Kingston and its citizens.

John McKinnon, President,
Kingston & District Labour Council.

TO OUR FELLOW STUDENTS

A lot of students complain about "the system" or "the machine." The world ahead looks like one long process of fitting in. Some of you may think that it's a world not worth fitting into, that it's got to be changed.

A community action project will show you just what kind of a system it is. Such a project will show you how much it's got to be changed, and some ways of changing it.

Your desire now to see it change is probably largely an intellectual conviction, based on some kind of idealism you've managed to preserve somewhere inside you. If you don't act soon on those ideals they won't be much more than mementoes from your childhood.

Community organizing is a way of acting on your ideals, of making them relevant to a living situation, and having them altered and refined by that situation. And that situation will not be an easy one. Change of any kind does not come easy in our society. Almost every person, group or institution you deal with will want to keep itself secure rather than change. You too, will find change within yourself a hard thing to take at times.

Educators say we learn by making decisions. An action project is a learning experience in the truest sense of the word. In a project like ours you make decisions which involve risks - not the risk of losing a few marks on a paper or missing an A on your year, but losing a sense of yourself which was safe and secure.

This inevitably produces tension; sometimes a tension that is wearing - usually a tension that affirms that you are really alive and not just waiting to live.

Through community organizing, seeing your ideas and work get results, one fact becomes quite clear - that system exists only if we let it.

Dennis McDermott

